Men and women likely evolved different strategies for sexual selection based on the relative time they invested in their offspring (Buss and Schmitt 1993). Male preferences for choosing a mate are primarily based on a female’s fertility and reproductive value (Thornhill and Grammer 1999). Men will try to choose a partner whose characteristics signal that she is likely to conceive and who appears to have overall good health (Buss and Schmitt 1993), resulting in women being typically younger in a marriage across societies (Kenrick and Keefe 1992). The signaling that takes place among women is typically done during intersexual competition Women signal men through verbal and non-verbal means to let men know they are interested in interacting with them (Grammer et al. 2000; Renninger et al. 2004; Wade and Slemp 2013; Wade and Feldman 2016), and to get an opportunity to find out about the men’s personalities (Grammer et al. 2000).

In order for women to compete intersexually as well as intrasexually, it was adaptive for women to deceive both their rivals and men in order to match the male preferences and obtain an optimal mate (Haselton et al. 2005). Consistent with this reasoning, research has found that women may employ deceptive tactics in order to align with a male’s mate preferences.

Previous research discovered that deception typically involved women altering their physical appearance (Tooke and Camire 1991), altering the appearance of their body through behaviors such as wearing facial makeup and exaggerating their hip movements while walking (Tooke and Camire 1991), and withholding their age when writing a personal advertisement for a mate (Pawlowski and Dunbar 1991). Women most frequently report using intersexual competition tactics that involve altering their physical appearance to exhibit “more” of their physical assets in the hope that such action would elevate a potential male partner’s perception of their physical assets. The women who decide to withhold their age are typically in the 35- to 50-year-old range since older women such as this have lowered fertility and reproductive value. It is adaptive for this group of women to withhold their age in order to obtain a more optimal mate. Also, this type of age withholding deception may be viewed as more passive than active (Pawlowski and Dunbar 1999). Women were found to most frequently report intersexual competition tactics that serve as a strategy for a female to present “more” of her assets in order to alter a potential male partner’s perception of her physical attributes. This alteration of physical appearance is motivated by males’ general preferences for attractive and youthful female partners.
Women may also deceive men about their sexual experiences. In some cases, this is dependent on the current mating strategy (Buss and Schmitt 1993) the women is motivated by. For example, women may downplay their sexual experience because personality traits that signal promiscuity are not desirable for a long-term mate (Buss and Schmitt 1993). Additionally, women may also deceive a male partner about their commission of sexual infidelity. If a woman was to successfully deceive a male by engaging in an extra-pair copulation (EPC), she could increase her fitness since this EPC partner choice diversifies the genetic material of resultant offspring and can lead to the receipt of more paternal investment (Smith 1984). If the woman does not deceive the male partner about her commission of sexual infidelity, she could suffer harm from her male partner, a lower parental investment from him, and mate expulsion as a consequence since he is being cuckolded. Thus, a woman would have to deceive her partner about the commission of any EPCs in order to maintain her current long-term partnership.

So, clearly, deception on the part of a woman is a tactic that includes multiple behavioral strategies that may be used by females to facilitate the chances of finding an optimal mate and keeping an optimal mate.

References


